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Bijlage(n) -
Betreft **Internationalisation**

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Dit betreft een Engelstalig advies

Geacht College van Bestuur,

In the midst of internationalisation discussions on university and national levels, the Central Student Council of the University of Amsterdam (CSR of the UvA thereafter) would like to bring forward a list of recommendations to highlight student matters concerned with the topic. Complementing the effort from the *Taskforce International Classroom* (specifically the finalised advice from the taskforce), this unsolicited advice is intended as an inspiration for further discussions among students of UvA and a work in progress that contributes the formulation of university policies.

First and foremost of all, internationalisation should happen in a sustainable fashion and ultimately for the quality of education. With the UvA's aspiration to be a bilingual university in the Dutch higher education and research landscape, the CSR would like to emphasize on the university's responsibilities to warrant high-quality education, access to information and participation in extracurricular opportunities *e.g. student participatory bodies, student organizations*.

Through multiple discussions with students, student representatives, student organisations and student participatory bodies within the university, a list of recommendation has been structured as below. The list is ordered per topic:

1) Classroom Curriculum:

i) Teaching staff

- C1 level proficiency is suggested as a language requirement for the language of teaching, which should also be taken into account in the university's language policy. In addition to this, the CSR would like to add a further remark that the language requirement should be applied to PhD candidates who have teaching hours.
- The role of teaching staff is imperative in setting a shared common classroom culture and reducing gaps for students of varying backgrounds. For example, having the common understanding to raise the hand before speaking in class, or English as the only language during the class period.
- The CSR recommends the CvB to further investigate the current role of the teaching staffs in facilitating welcoming environment and culture within classrooms.

ii) Exam and curriculum

- There have been complaints about irregular English usage in examinations/tests which may result in students' misinterpretation and thus poor academic performance. English exam materials are suggested to be proofread (for phrasing, ambiguity, etc.) to prevent potential jeopardy in education quality.
- Aligning with the international classroom, course materials and curriculum should also include global elements for the relevance of a broader perspective (subjective to the programme's focus).
- The CSR recommends a review of examination and course materials prior to their release, and a curriculum scan for the inclusion of relevant elements in regards to the respective course.

iii) Language and language courses

- With the ongoing work in formulating guidelines for language change in programmes, the CSR would like to highlight the purpose of such change should be integrally for the benefit of quality education and should be done with the proper consultation of relevant stakeholders of the programme. The CSR would also like to reiterate the juridical position of these stakeholders through these stakeholders, which has to be taken into due account.
- In light of integration of international students in the Dutch society, language courses may be a good way to introduce Dutch cultures (through study materials) and to provide a basic understanding to the Dutch language. In some discussions, it has been indicated that students who acquire working Dutch proficiency have a brighter job prospect in the Netherlands, integrate better and eventually stay in the Netherlands after graduation. These show the potential of Dutch language course within the education.
- The CSR recommends the timely inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the language change process for programmes, and a relook at the learning outcomes within international classrooms.

2) Increasing work pressure

i) Staffs

- Be it support staffs or teaching staffs, the working pressure has escalated as an unintended or unforeseen aftermath of internationalisation. While processes are being optimised, this issue is worrying as it concerns the health of UvA staff members.
- On top of normal work, trainings are now required to improve staffs' capability to serve the international student population, e.g. admission process, teaching in English.
- The CSR recommends the CvB to take the escalating workload of staff members due to additional responsibilities in relation to internationalisation into account.

ii) Student bodies

- Be it the medezeggenschap or study associations, student bodies are greatly affected by the university's decision to internationalise. There is a responsibility for the university to support the proper operations of student participatory bodies and grassroots student organisations.

3) Communication

i) Transparency and a reflection of reality

- In the marketing of university programmes, it is necessary to maintain the integrity of information that is aligned with the reality of the situation. This is imperative so that (prospective) students are given realistic expectations regarding their programmes and the student life at the UvA. A good example is the housing situation in Amsterdam. The competitiveness of the Amsterdam housing market is a growing concern and should be reiterated via the renewed UvA Housing website.
- The CSR recommends a continuous review of its communication to its students and prospective students with regards to a clear representation of reality.

ii) Marketing and communication rationale

- There have been discussions about the need to market the UvA extensively abroad to attract international students. A shift of strategy to attract prospective domestic students may be equally valuable for UvA as a Dutch university to diversify its population in terms of student backgrounds – which is otherwise a lost opportunity for the university.
- While it is important to market the university, student-centric communication should be the focus of the university to engage its own community. A student may spend a few months to apply and get admitted into the university. However, s/he eventually spends year(s) at the university. Looking at the student's journey of education, money invested in enriching the student's experience potentially via (communication) engagement is of a higher added value.
- The rationale of communication expenditure should, therefore, be weighed accordingly to the value given to the students.
- The CSR recommends student-centric communication that is of greater value and engagement for its UvA community.

4) Student Services

i) Expansion of services

- In the *International Student Barometer 2017*, there have been key areas of improvement indicated by students: housing, career, social. That aside, students have often indicated the lack of support and the unclarity in communication regarding the services from the university e.g. students being referred from one point to another. This indicates a window of opportunity for development. The UvA's International Office which traditionally focuses on international student admission and in/outbound exchanges students may be a point of expansion to serve the growing vast number of international student and to integrate the wider university population as one community.
- In comparison to other universities with a long-standing record in the international education industry like Melbourne University, National University of Singapore or New York University, the UvA is developing in this aspect. It may be a point of reference to these universities and nearby UK university like Imperial College London, in how they integrate their students as one community and celebrate respective cultural colours.
- The CSR recommends a consideration of possible revamp and/or expansion of the student services and facilities that serve the needs of the UvA student community.

ii) Reference: NYU International Student Support Centre (ISSC)

- The potential of the International Office is immense. In reference of NYU's ISSC, the centre helps (both domestic and international) students to adjust to the local education system and to develop cultural sensitivity and awareness. This shows that the role of the UvA's International Office is imperative.
- The International Office may possibly expand its services to:
 - social programming: activities, cultural fairs, social events
 - translation services
 - health & wellness consultation: advice on local systems
 - housing: legal assistance
- The CSR recommends an exploration of this model which may serve a greater value for the UvA's community.

5) Student Experience

i) Orientation and the first phase of university life

- This is a crucial period when students need facilitation to adapt to a new place, a new phase of life and new community. Orientation to local cultures, the Dutch education, local system, UvA history and crucial services/facilities available within the university is imperative.
- Infographics or videos which could be played and reused throughout the year could be useful to help students understand local cultures, the Dutch education (e.g. grading) and the university better. This may be developed into an orientation package that can be updated annually.

- The CSR recommends the development of orientation package and communication that facilitate new students' integration within the UvA community.

ii) Student associations (SVs)

- The SVs are (considerably) the closest student organisations to students.
- The decision of language change in programme inevitably impacts the functioning of SVs. As an important point that helps students to familiarise with their new environment and study, and to develop a sense of belonging to the university, SVs which are linked to English-taught programmes have experienced a lack of support and facilitation in face of the changing student demography.
- In the bilingual transition of SVs, there has been little support from the university to facilitate the process. Some SVs had to rely on their own limited resources to ensure their relevance and accessibility to all student members e.g. translating hundred(s) pages of documents from Dutch to English. As it is apparent that the university holds the responsibility for its decision to change a programme's language of instruction, it should also facilitate the processes that are influenced by such change. Some SVs have also been unofficially made the point of contact shall students have enquiries about their programme.
- Given the (inevitable) additional roles and responsibilities, SVs should be empowered further in terms of resources, translation of primary internal documents (e.g. statutes) and skill set (e.g. intercultural training), to extend the available number of change agents/facilitators.
- However, given the convenience and availability of SVs, it should be acknowledged that the integration of students and communication to students remain the responsibility of the university. The effort to orientate and integrate students should not be the responsibility of SVs alone.
- The CSR recommends a greater empowerment to grassroots student organisations which are involved in the integration of students in their academic community.

iii) Student participatory bodies / medezeggenschap

With the decision made for the university to be bilingual, the ambition should be embodied by the entire organisation from within. The internal environment of the university has to be aware that the non-Dutch speaking international students are also part of the university community.

Therefore, adaptation should be made to include everyone in internal discussions.

- *Working groups*
 - Discussions should be made bilingual-friendly for inclusion, especially topics which concern the non-Dutch speaking students and the broader community.
- *Working files/documents*
 - Translation of working (concept) files/documents is necessary for the proper functioning and participation of student bodies in the UvA wide policy discussion.
 - In ideal cases, bilingual version should be received simultaneously.

6) Amsterdam student housing dilemma

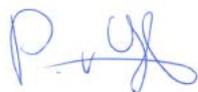
- The shrinking student housing supply and inflating rental price trends in Amsterdam are extremely worrying. Prior to this point, the importance of transparent and realistic communication in setting expectations of (prospective) students and how this can be achieved have been pointed out. The lack of housing is a problem that is shared by all students, it demands for a higher priority and more concrete actions from the university. Needless for further reiteration, housing is a basic necessity and thus a fundamental requirement for students to be able to perform their academic commitments. Without which, a student is unlikely to be a student. The CSR strongly highlights the need to address this issue as one that affects all students of the UvA.

For the benefit of the understanding of all discussions that have taken place, the 5-page document has been structured to be brief and comprehensive of relevant contexts. Should there be any needs for clarification regarding this unsolicited advice, the CSR is pleased to set up a separate appointment with you. The CSR hopes to receive your response to this advice.

Summary of Recommendations:

- The CSR recommends the CvB to further investigate the current role of the teaching staffs in facilitating welcoming environment and culture within classrooms.
- The CSR recommends a review of examination and course materials prior to their release, and a curriculum scan for the inclusion of relevant elements in regards to the respective course.
- The CSR recommends the timely inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the language change process for programmes, and a relook at the learning outcomes within international classrooms.
- The CSR recommends the CvB to take the escalating workload of staff members due to additional responsibilities in relation to internationalisation into account.
- The CSR recommends a continuous review of its communication to its students and prospective students with regards to the clear representation to reality.
- The CSR recommends student-centric communication and services that are of greater value and engagement for its UvA community.
- The CSR recommends a consideration of possible revamp and/or expansion of the student services and facilities that serve the needs of the UvA student community.
- The CSR recommends the development of orientation package and communication that facilitate new students' integration within the UvA community.
- The CSR recommends a greater empowerment to grassroots student organisations which are involved in the integration of students in their academic community.

Met vriendelijke groet,



Pim van Helvoirt
Voorzitter CSR 17|18